

VZCZCXRO1625
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV
DE RUEHBM #0881/01 1501552
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 301552Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4518
INFO RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY 0299
RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA PRIORITY 0074
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BUCHAREST 000881

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NCE BILL SILKWORTH; EUR/SCE STEPHEN GEE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/30/2021

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [YI](#) [EU](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: ROMANIA PLEDGES SUPPORT ON KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE
DURING WISNER VISIT

Classified By: DCM Mark Taplin, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Romania's president, foreign minister, and national security advisor agreed to support U.S. efforts to resolve Kosovo's final status when they met in Bucharest with Ambassador Frank Wisner, the Secretary's Special Representative to the Kosovo Status Talks. While noting serious concerns for the stability of Kosovo and Serbia, as well as possible implications for separatist enclaves in Moldova and Georgia, President Basescu stated that he would assist U.S. efforts to help Serbia move beyond resentments over Kosovo towards Euro-Atlantic integration. At the same time, Basescu and other interlocutors expressed strong concern about potential instability in Serbia, particularly if Kosovo independence produced a Serbian government led by the extreme nationalist Radicals. National Security Advisor Sergiu Medar said Romania feared an eventual NATO departure from Kosovo, producing potential instability given Europe's "previously poor record" in the Western Balkans without U.S. help. Other Romanian senior foreign policy officials, as well as members of the center-left social democratic opposition, expressed appreciation for Ambassador Wisner's consultations in Bucharest, but expressed similar concerns about potential radicalization and instability along Romania's southwest frontier. End Summary.

12. (C) President Traian Basescu received Ambassadors Taubman and Wisner in his hospital suite on May 23 for consultations regarding the Kosovo Status Talks. Basescu, who was recuperating after his surgery in Vienna for a herniated disc in his lower back, was dressed in a business suit and walked cautiously, with a limp, to the adjoining room for the talks. Ambassador Taubman began the meeting by handing President Basescu the get-well note from President Bush. Basescu seemed relatively well, although he tired a bit towards the end of the hour-long meeting -- twice the scheduled length.

Basescu: Romania Stands with the U.S. on Kosovo

13. (C) Basescu told Ambassadors Wisner and Taubman that Romania stands behind U.S. efforts to resolve the status of Kosovo, despite deep concerns about the effect that Kosovo independence would have on the stability of the Western Balkans. The President said he earlier held a different stance, but had changed it after conversations with Assistant Secretary Fried and Vice President Cheney, in which he

SIPDIS

concluded that "Kosovo status is not our baby, but is an American baby."

14. (C) Basescu outlined his concerns about the possibility of the Serbian Radical Party coming to power after independence,

leading to Serbia's continued isolation within Europe. He believes a Radical victory is a strong possibility if an election is held after Kosovo independence has been determined. A Radical government would lead to Serbia's further isolation. In order to counterbalance this, he said, elections should be held in Serbia immediately before independence is granted. This would give the democratic forces led by President Tadic and PM Kostunica a chance to win a clear majority, and then to use a full four years to recover from the blow of independence. Basescu added that there would likely need to be new elections in Serbia as a result of Montenegrin independence, and asked Wisner to consider delaying independence until after the elections have been completed. Basescu does not believe Kostunica will call for a referendum on independence.

15. (C) Basescu said the negotiations, as they are currently being conducted, make Tadic and Kostunica appear "as monkeys, sent to negotiate a decision that has already been taken." He challenged, "why should you make Serbia in charge of negotiating decentralization and churches, if this is indeed the legitimate concern of Kosovars?" At the same time, the President said, Serbia needs to be offered something to help it through this difficult time. He doubted that membership in the EU and NATO was a strong enough incentive. "Politicians understand the EU," Basescu asserted, "but the people of Serbia don't make a close connection between the EU and their daily problems." The lack of enthusiasm among EU members for further enlargement also diminished the power of the EU carrot.

16. (C) Basescu warned that there would need to be a continued international military presence in Kosovo after independence because of the deep distrust between the Albanian and Serb communities. He feared that the United States was in a hurry to hand off Kosovo to the Europeans, and that Europe was not

BUCHAREST 00000881 002 OF 003

prepared to shoulder the burden of keeping the peace there. Basescu said he also thought the Russians would use Kosovo independence to support independence movements in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, and expected FM Lavrov to make increasingly harsh public statements comparing Kosovo to these issues.

17. (C) Ambassador Wisner asked President Basescu to talk to Kostunica and Tadic, as a friend, and urge them to be realistic about independence. The United States does want to strengthen its partnership with Serbia, but we cannot help Serbia unless Serbia wants to join with us. Wisner also asked Basescu to be an advocate for Serbia's European perspective in Brussels. He asked the Romanians to engage with the leaders in Pristina too, who would very much need the support of their neighbors in order to move along the European path. Basescu said that regardless of reservations he had, he recognized the decision had been taken and that "all of us have to put our shoulders behind the wheel." He pledged, "I will do my part." He said he would call Kostunica personally, keep an eye on the other problems in Kosovo and Serbia, and keep an eye on the Russians.

NSA Medar: Basescu will engage Kostunica

18. (C) During a separate, National Security Advisor Medar stated that President Basescu would, indeed, talk to Kostunica as requested by Ambassador Wisner. Basescu recognized that Romania, which is perceived as the most pro-Serbian of Serbia's neighbors, could play an important role in encouraging Belgrade to take a rational approach toward Kosovo independence. Medar asserted that Romania is pro-Serb because it has been in the best interests of Romania, although over time Bucharest has noticed that the Serbs "rarely give anything in return." He said, for example, that President Basescu had only asked for one thing during his trip to Belgrade -- official recognition of the

Romanian Orthodox Church in Serbia. Medar noted that the Serbian response to this request was passage of new legislation by the parliament a few weeks later that flatly denied such recognition. Fundamentally, however, Romania seeks "stability and security" along its western border. Medar said Romania does not want to have to deploy troops along the frontier with Serbia in the event of instability brought by the rise of an extremist-led government.

¶9. (S) Ambassador Wisner asked how the Romanians could "even remotely believe" that the Russians would be able to link Kosovo independence with the frozen conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Medar said that Romania had obtained information that Lavrov and Smirnov had actually developed a plan to this effect in the event Kosovo was granted independence. Ambassador Wisner underscored that there is absolutely no parallel and that neither the U.S. nor the international community would allow such linkage. NSA Medar reiterated Basescu's assertion that the prospect of eventual EU membership could be used as a carrot for the Serbs, but that new skepticism among EU member states towards expansion had diminished the potency of this incentive. He added that once Romania is in the EU -- as expected in January 2007 -- Bucharest will be a strong advocate for EU expansion in the Western Balkans. In addition to the potential stability it would provide, he confided that Bucharest also hopes EU member states will agree to begin talks on accession for Moldova at the same time. Although Romania does not seek reunification with Moldova, Medar said the GOR views Moldova's eventual inclusion in the EU as a means for bringing the two historically linked countries closer together.

¶10. (C) Medar underscored that Romania wants NATO to remain in Kosovo -- the Europeans cannot take care of Kosovo alone and renewed instability in the Western Balkans would have a direct impact on Romania. He also emphasized the importance of exposing young Serbs to the West, noting how important such exposure had been for Romania's development as a democracy. Medar suggested that one way for engaging the Serbs constructively might be to encourage Serbia to deploy a platoon in Afghanistan, perhaps alongside the Romanian troops there. Ambassador Wisner expressed appreciation for Romanian support, urged continued creative thinking, and committed to remain in close contact with Bucharest throughout discussions on Kosovo's status.

FM Ungureanu: Engage the EU

BUCHAREST 00000881 003 OF 003

¶11. (C) On May 24, Foreign Minister Ungureanu told Ambassador Wisner that he had paid a call on President Basescu immediately after Wisner had left the hospital. Ungureanu said that a "second, and therefore unusual," EU informal ministerial meeting would take place in Vienna at the end of the week that might signal whether the EU would stall or resume enlargement towards the Western Balkans. Ungureanu said there was no consensus among EU states on policy toward the Western Balkans and described policy formulation in an expanded EU as "27 cats) try to herd them." He urged Ambassador Wisner to engage the EU on Kosovo before the ministerial to try to ensure a positive view towards EU expansion in the Western Balkans. Ungureanu asked, "How much of our relations with Belgrade are valuable to you?" Wisner responded, "what is at stake is not Kosovo, but Serbia," and emphasized the importance of helping Serbia move forward towards Euro-Atlantic integration. Ungureanu promised to try to help, but worried about the precedent an independent Kosovo might set for Russia to use in other frozen conflicts. Wisner assured him of Kosovo's special circumstance and the extreme difficulty Russia would have if it tried to unilaterally change borders apart from the international community. Ungureanu concluded, "Serbia's neighbors should participate" in resolving Kosovo and offered, "let us know

how we can help."

¶12. (C) Presidential Counselor for International Relations Anca Ilinoiu also met with Ambassador Wisner and emphasized security concerns on both sides of Romania) in Serbia and in Moldova. She noted that the international community was focused on the future status of Kosovo as a way to extract itself from Kosovo, but stressed that the "day after" mattered. She said Romania's own experience showed how little a revolution solved in transitioning toward democracy, and noted that Kosovo never had a democratic tradition that it could recapture. Ilinoiu noted that the EU should have a stronger role in the Western Balkans, but added that it was not sufficiently "complex and coherent at this time." She also noted concern that Kosovo was the "wrong model" as a nation-state rather than a "civic state" like Montenegro, since its population became 90% Albanian as a result of processes since 1999. Overall, she emphasized the difficulties following Kosovo independence and argued that the "U.S. should stay engaged for Kosovo, Europe, and other examples that wish to follow Kosovo." Wisner assured her "the U.S. would not walk away lightly," but would also want stable and effective governance in Kosovo.

¶13. (C) Ambassador Wisner also met with three members of the center-left opposition. Social Democrat Senator George Maior commented that he met Tadic at the Socialist International in Athens and found him "inflexible and radical on Kosovo." Maior commented that public opinion was not prepared in Serbia, that Serbians feel surrounded with no end in sight, but added that the only realistic solution was independence in Kosovo. EU Parliamentary Observer and former Defense Minister Ion Pascu said Romania could reach out to Serbia to help them cope and prepare them for EU membership since "Romanians are credible in Belgrade." He cautioned, however, that Kosovo's territory is arranged according to five clans with feuds, and "we could end up with non-Europeans with Albanian blood laws." Social Democrat leader Mircea Geoana also met very briefly with Wisner.

TAUBMAN